

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00

SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05 /055 W

-----047368 031126Z /12

O R 022025Z DEC 77

FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5012

INFO AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PINT, BR

SUBJECT: INITIAL COMMENT ON GEISEL DECEMBER 1 SPEECH

REF: BRASILIA 9900

1. INITIAL POLITICAL AND PRESS REACTION TO GEISEL DECEMBER 1 SPEECH IS GENERALLY POSITIVE, ALTHOUGH LEFT WING OF MDB IS CAUTIOUSLY SKEPTICAL AND NUMEROUS POLITICAL AND OTHER FIGURES ARE RESERVING JUDGMENT PENDING CLOSER EXAMINATION OF TEXT. AMONG LATTER, MDB PRESIDENT ULYSSES GUIMARAES AND SAO PAULO CARDINAL EVARISTO ARNS ARE MOST PROMINENT. GUIMARAES WOULD NOT EVEN COMMENT PRIVATELY TO POLITICAL COUNSELOR EXCEPT TO INDICATE HIS BELIEF THAT, IF PRESIDENT IS SERIOUS ABOUT REFORMS, EVEN LIMITED CHANGES WOULD BE IMPORTANT BECAUSE THEY COULD LEAD TO FURTHER CHANGES LATER ON. HE WAS CAREFUL NOT TO EXPRESS ANY PREMATURE CONCLUSIONS, HOWEVER.

2. MDB SECRETARY GENERAL THALES RAMALHO, ON OTHER HAND, TOLD PRESS PRESIDENT'S SPEECH WAS MOST IMPORTANT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT SINCE DECEMBER 1968 (WHEN INSTITUTIONAL ACT NO 5 WAS HANDED DOWN). MDB CHAMBER LEADER FREITAS NOBRE SPOKE FOR SKEPTICS, SAYING

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PROMISES OF REDEMOCRATIZATION HAVE BEEN CYCLICAL AND UNKEPT.

3. ARENA IS SAID TO BE GENERALLY "EUPHORIC" OVER SPEECH, ALTHOUGH IT IS REASONABLE TO EXPECT THAT SOME ARENISTAS ARE LESS THAN PLEASED -- ESPECIALLY THOSE EX-FROTISTAS AND OTHERS WHOSE POLITICAL FUTURES GEISEL MAY HAVE FURTHER ENDANGERED BY CATEGORICALLY STATING HIS REFUSAL TO CHANGE THE RULES WHICH WILL GOVERN THE 1978 ELECTIONS.

4. COUNTRY'S TWO LEADING NEWSPAPERS MIRRORED POLITICAL REACTION. RIO'S JORNAL DO BRASIL SAID SPEECH PROVIDED "A CLEAR SIGN THAT THE DISTANCE THAT HAS BEEN SEPARATING THE NATION FROM THE STATE CAN BEGIN TO BE DIMINISHED...PRESIDENT GEISEL OPENED A PROCESS OF DEMOCRATIC RESTORATION THAT GOES BACK TO THE ORIGINS OF THE REVOLUTION. IT IS NOW UP TO ALL SECTORS OF SOCIETY TO DEFINE THAT WHICH THEY WISH FOR THEMSELVES AND FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS." ESTADO DE SAO PAULO WAS MORE CAUTIOUS. IN THE FIRST OF AN APPARENT SERIES OF EDITORIALS ON "THE TONE AND CONTENT OF A SPEECH", IT FOCUSED ON GEISEL'S "AGGRESSIVENESS AGAINST THE OPPOSITION, PARTISAN OR OTHER," IN A BRIEF PASSAGE IN WHICH THE PRESIDENT REFERRED TO "THE INFLEXIBILITY OF SINCERE BUT RADICAL REVOLUTIONARIES, (E.E., EX-FRONTISTAS) THE IRRESPONSIBILITY, IF NOT BAD FAITH, OF IMPASSIONED CONFRONTATIONISTS, OBSTINATE SUBVERSIVES OR CONTUMACIOUS RUFFIANS."

5. O ESTADO COLUMNISTS, HOWEVER, FELT BETTER ABOUT THE SPEECH. VILASBOAS CORREIA SAID SPEECH WAS NOT ONLY MOST IMPORTANT POLITICAL DOCUMENT SINCE 1A-5, BUT "THE FIRST CLEAR-CUT, SOLEMN DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT TO DEMOCRATIC RESTORATION, DULY EXPUNGED OF ADJECTIVAL RESTRICTIONS." CARLOS CHAGAS, A BIT LESS EUPHORIC, CALLED DECEMBER 1 A DAY OF "PERSONAL TRIUMPH" FOR THE PRESIDENT, CONCLUDING AFTER DETAILED EXAMINATION OF THE SPEECH AND ITS DEFECTS (ATTACK ON GUIMARAES, DEFENSE OF APRIL PACKAGE), THAT IT ONCE AGAIN SHOWED GEISEL TO BE A MAN OF INFLEXIBLE AND OBSTINATE PERSONALITY -- BUT THAT, "FORTUNATELY, THESE CHARACTERISTICS HAVE THIS TIME TAKEN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HIM DOWN THE RIGHT PATH." CHAGAS CAUTIONED, HOWEVER, THAT THE REACTION OF THE MILITARY HIGH COMMAND IS STILL TO COME.

6. FINALLY, JORNAL DO BRASIL'S CARLOS CASTELLO BRANCO ACKNOWLEDGED SOBERLY THAT THE PRESIDENT HAS TAKEN A "STEP FORWARD" AND HAS REMOVED "ALL DOUBT AS TO THE PERMANENCE OF HIS PROGRAM OF GOVERNMENT." NOTING THE CONSIDERABLE DIFFICULTIES THAT LIE AHEAD, CASTELLO EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT "IN ITS FIRM DISPOSITION TO INSTITUTE REFORMS, THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE ABLE TO OBTAIN THAT MEASURE OF TRUST THAT WILL BE INDISPENSABLE TO THE SUCCESS OF THE MEASURES IT WILL EVENTUALLY PROPOSE TO THE CONGRESS." CASTELLO REGRETTED, HOWEVER, THAT GEISEL COULD NOT HAVE REVERSED THE RESTRICTIVE ELECTORAL MEASURES ADOPTED LAST APRIL SO THAT NEXT YEAR'S ELECTIONS COULD BE TRULY AUTHENTIC.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SPEECHES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 02-Dec-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BRASIL09960
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770449-0250
Format: TEL
From: BRASILIA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t197712102/aaaadifa.tel
Line Count: 109
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 18decefb-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 BRASILIA 9900
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08-Dec-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 107231
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: INITIAL COMMENT ON GEISEL DECEMBER 1 SPEECH
TAGS: PINT, BR
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/18decefb-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009